



# Commuter Bus Implementation Plan



June 2022



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## Introduction

The Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority (EPTA) seeks to implement a new commuter bus service that will connect commuters in Jefferson and Berkley Counties, West Virginia to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's (WMATA) Silver Line at the new Ashburn Station in Virginia. With its close proximity to the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, this region has experienced steady population and housing growth over the last 15 years and has seen an increase in demand for a commuter transit service. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, more than half of workers in Jefferson and Berkley Counties commuted to locations outside the Eastern Panhandle, with many commuting to employment destinations along the Dulles Toll Road in Virginia, along I-270 in Maryland, as well as into Washington, D.C.

The demand for commuter transit service has been consistently voiced by local commuters through surveys conducted for EPTA's Transit Development Plan (TDP) and the Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization's (HEPMPO) Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) with many respondents identifying transit service to Northern Virginia and Washington, D.C. as a local priority for EPTA. However, EPTA currently only provides local transit connections in Jefferson and Berkley Counties and supports limited commuter MARC train services offered by the Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA) that provides connections along I-270 to the Washington, D.C. area.

### WMATA Silver Line Extension

In 2002, WMATA approved the Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project, a 23-mile transit extension linking Washington, D.C. to growing centers of employment and activity along the Dulles Corridor in Fairfax and Loudoun Counties, including Tyson's Corner, the Reston-Herndon area, and Dulles International Airport. Phase 1 of the Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project was completed in 2014, connecting East Falls Church to Tysons Corner and Wiehle-Reston East. Phase 2 of the service expansion includes 11.5 additional miles of rail to Ashburn in Loudoun County, Virginia by way of Washington Dulles International Airport. The new service is expected to attract those traveling via Dulles Airport, as well as those commuting to Northern Virginia, and Washington, D.C.

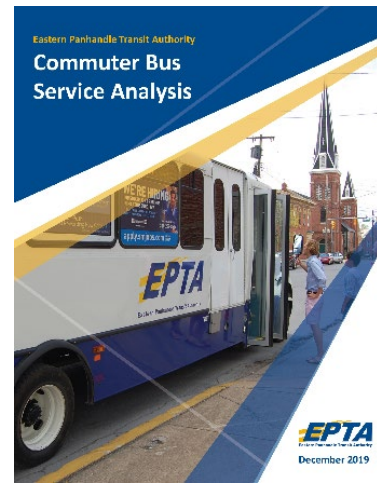
The new Ashburn Station, part of Phase 2 of the Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project, will serve as the terminus for EPTA's new commuter bus service to connect with the Silver Line Metro rail service. Located in the median of the Dulles Greenway near the Route 772 intersection, the station will have two parking garages as well as convenient pick-up and drop-off locations for the commuter buses. The Ashburn Station is slated to open summer 2022.



Ashburn Metro Station

## Commuter Bus Feasibility Analysis

EPTA, in coordination with HEPMPO, conducted a Commuter Bus Service Feasibility Analysis in 2019 to determine the viability of a new commuter transit service and demonstrate the potential ridership demand for the service. The analysis identified existing service needs, the transit market and long-term viability of the commuter bus service, implementation requirements, and potential enhancements for expanding the service if it is proven successful. The final Commuter Bus Service Analysis can be found on [HEPMPO's website](#)



Commuter Bus Service Analysis

### Route Options

The service analysis identified two potential route options between Martinsburg to the Ashburn Silver Line Station via VA Route 9 and US 340 / VA Route 7. Both routes would begin in downtown Martinsburg at EPTA's new Transit Center and include a stop at Potomac Marketplace along WV Route 9.

### Ridership Demand

The service analysis also performed a potential ridership analysis, utilizing Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) commuter flow data factored with transit propensity values, to determine the total of potential riders who would use transit if certain factors aligned with their needs, such as cost or schedule. The analysis showed that the number of potential riders would exceed the capacity of the service as planned.

## Project Activities

To ensure the successful implementation of the commuter bus service, EPTA and HEPMPO identified key stakeholders to solicit feedback throughout the development of the plan. These stakeholders included:

- West Virginia Division of Public Transit
- City of Ranson, West Virginia
- City of Martinsburg, West Virginia
- Loudoun County Transit
- Heidenberg Properties Group

The stakeholders participated in a series of virtual meetings, beginning with the Kick-off Meeting in August 2021 to discuss project goals and objectives, establish a timeline for the plan, and identify key factors for success. Bi-weekly progress meetings were used to discuss implementation details and provide feedback on plan updates. In addition, coordination meetings with Heidenberg Properties Group, the property owner of Potomac Marketplace, and Loudoun County Transit were held to discuss bus stop locations, connections, potential challenges, and establishment of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with EPTA.

### Public Survey

The need for a public survey was identified in the stakeholder meeting in order to better understand demand and optimal times for the commuter bus

EPTA Commuter Bus Survey

Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority (EPTA) in coordination with Hagerstown Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization (HEPMPO) is seeking input on the proposed commuter bus service that would connect residents to the newly extended WAA Metro Silver Line at the Ashburn Station for employment in the Washington, D.C. Metro area. The survey will be open November 19th through December 15th.

For questions or more information on this project, please email Matt Mulheisen at [mulheisen@eastpan.com](mailto:mulheisen@eastpan.com)

1. Would you take advantage of this commuter bus service? \*

Yes

No

2. Which morning departure time from Martinsburg would you most likely use? (Check all that apply) \*

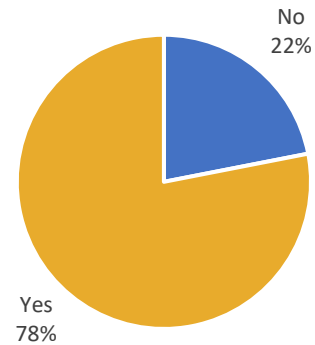
AM Southbound Service	Martinsburg, WV		Ranson, WV		Ashburn, VA	
	Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart
-	5:00 AM	5:20 AM	5:30 AM	6:25 AM	-	-
-	6:00 AM	6:25 AM	6:35 AM	7:30 AM	-	-
-	7:00 AM	7:25 AM	7:35 AM	8:40 AM	-	-

Commuter Bus Survey

service. The survey was available for 30 days from November 15, 2021 to December 15, 2021 and provided critical public feedback. The survey sought to identify:

- Interest in taking this service,
- Preferred morning and afternoon departure times,
- Home and work ZIP codes,
- Start and end of the workday,
- Impact of COVID-19 on commuting patterns,
- Deciding factors for choosing to take the commuter service, and
- Current transit usage.

Figure 1: Would you take advantage of this commuter bus service?



In total, 228 people completed the survey and 78% of the respondents indicated they would take advantage of this commuter bus service and worked in ZIP codes that would be serviced by this commuter bus and/or the WMATA Silver Line. The survey results have been incorporated into the Implementation Plan and can be found in **Appendix A**.

### Public Comment

Once the draft of the Implementation Plan was completed, the public was given a 30-day period from May 1 to May 30, 2022, to review the draft plan and provide comments. In addition, a public meeting was held on May 19, 2022, to provide an overview of the Implementation Plan and allow for additional public comments. Public comments along with public announcements and notices can be found in **Appendix D**.

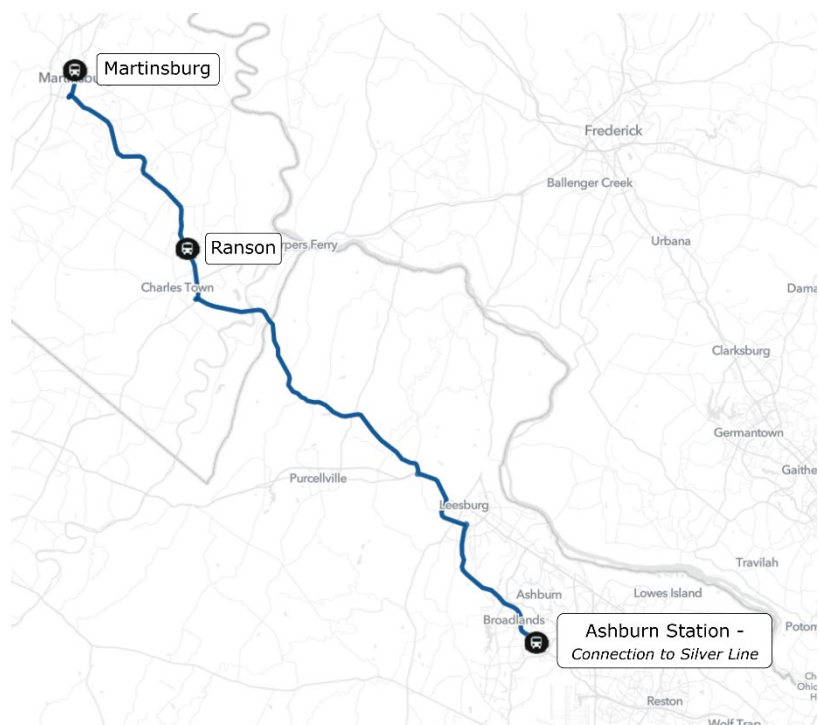
## Service Plan

EPTA reviewed the two route alignments identified in the Commuter Bus Feasibility Analysis and determined the Martinsburg to Silver Line via VA Route 9 alignment is the preferred alignment for the commuter bus service. This option minimizes total miles traveled as well as any delays that may result due to current and future construction on US Route 340.

### Route Alignment

The Martinsburg to Silver Line via VA Route 9 would originate in downtown Martinsburg at EPTA’s transfer center. The bus would depart the transfer center and travel south WV Route 9 to Potomac Marketplace in Ranson.

Figure 2: Martinsburg to Silver Line Route Alignment



From here, the bus would take WV Route 9/VA Route 9 to VA Route 7 and the Dulles Greenway, where it would arrive at the Ashburn Station. Once passengers board or alight at Ashburn Station, the bus would return to the transfer facility in downtown Martinsburg.

On deadhead trips – the return trip to Martinsburg in the morning and the trip to Ashburn Station in the afternoon - the commuter bus will not stop at Potomac Marketplace.

## Stops

The commuter bus service will include two stops: one at the Potomac Marketplace in Ranson and one at the Ashburn Station in Virginia.

### The Potomac Marketplace

EPTA coordinated with Heidenberg Properties to identify a suitable stop location at Potomac Marketplace. The stop, located along the west side of the property adjacent to the Weis Gas N Go, shown in **Figure 3**, would minimize conflicts between patrons of the businesses currently in the shopping center and those of the commuter bus service. The stop would also include 49 parking spaces dedicated to patrons of the commuter bus along the west side of the parking lot. The stop and parking spaces would be denoted with commuter bus specific signage installed by EPTA. No bus shelter would be installed at this time.

Weis Markets, Inc. the owner of the gas station, expressed no opposition to the commuter bus stop location.

### Ashburn Station

Loudoun County Transit identified two potential boarding and alighting locations for the EPTA commuter bus - one located at the North Pavilion and one at the kiss-and-ride lot at the South Pavilion. After on-going discussions and coordination with Loudoun County Transit, the kiss-and-ride lot, shown in **Figure 4**, was determined to be the preferred commuter bus stop location. Bus shelters would be available, and the stop would be denoted with commuter bus specific signage installed by EPTA.

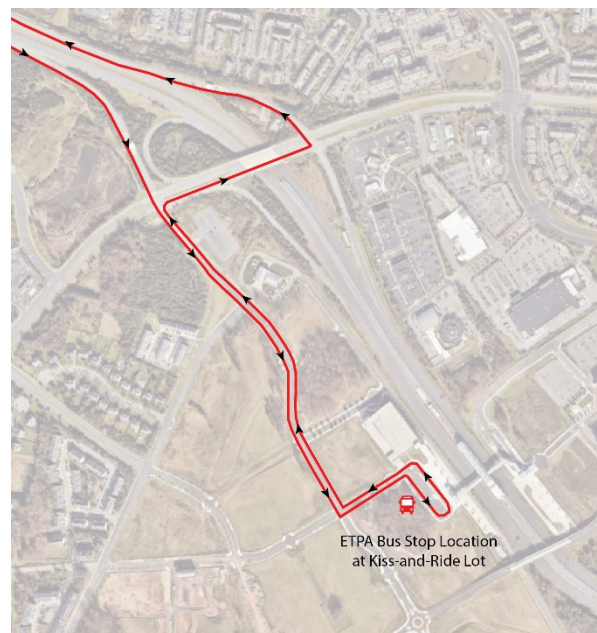
## Connecting Services

At the Ashburn Station, passengers would be able to connect to Loudoun County Transit or to the WMATA Silver Line.

Figure 3: Potomac Marketplace Bus Stop



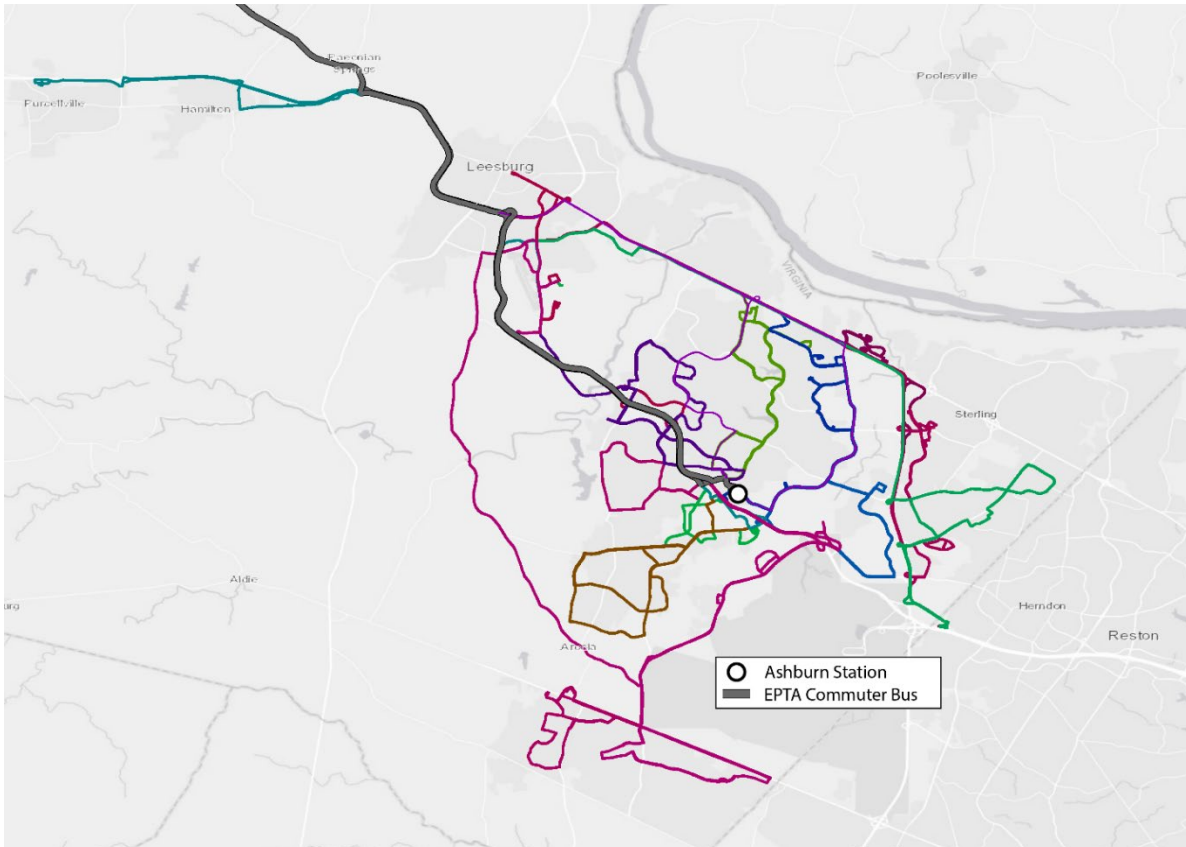
Figure 4: Ashburn Station Bus Stop



## Loudoun County Transit

In 2022, Loudoun County Transit announced updates to their fixed-route bus service. With the release of the updated service, several routes would service the Ashburn Station and would provide connections to

Figure 5: Loudoun County Transit Routes



those passengers who are employed in areas surrounding the station. **Figure 5**, highlights the updated routes and destinations, which include Leesburg and George Washington University north of the Dulles Greenway and Dulles Airport and Brambleton south of Dulles Greenway. Additional information, including schedules and fares, can be found on the Loudoun County Transit [website](#).

## WMATA

With the opening of Silver Line service to Ashburn Station expected in summer 2022, commuters would have the opportunity to utilize WMATA's Silver Line. The Silver Line would allow commuters to connect to Dulles Airport and major employment destinations along the Silver Line, including Tyson's Corner, Reston, and downtown Washington, D.C. as well as transfer to WMATA's other five metro lines. These lines provide additional opportunities for passengers to travel to employment opportunities throughout Northern Virginia, Washington, D.C., and Maryland. Additional information, including schedules and fares, can be found on WMATA's [website](#).



WMATA Metrorail Map

## Schedules

The following service schedule was developed for EPTA's commuter bus. The schedule takes in to account the number of commuter buses available for the service (EPTA anticipates purchasing two commuter buses), estimated travel time, layovers, schedules of other commuter services in the region, as well as commuter preferences based on survey results.

### Morning – Southbound Service

The morning buses would leave EPTA's transfer center in downtown Martinsburg at 6:00 AM and 7:00 AM. The buses would arrive at Potomac Marketplace in Ranson at 6:25 AM and 7:25 AM. There would be a 5-minute layover to allow passengers to board the vehicle. The buses would depart Potomac Marketplace at 6:30 AM and 7:30 AM and arrive at the Ashburn Station at 7:25 AM and 8:35 AM. There would be a 10-minute layover to allow passengers to alight and to allow for a driver break before returning to the transfer center at 8:50 AM and 10:00 AM.

Table 1: Morning Southbound Service

Martinsburg, WV		Ranson, WV		Ashburn, VA		Martinsburg, WV	
Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart
-	<b>6:00 AM</b>	6:25 AM	6:30 AM	7:25 AM	7:35 AM	8:50 AM	-
-	<b>7:00 AM</b>	7:25 AM	7:30 AM	8:35 AM	8:45 AM	10:00 AM	-

### Afternoon – Northbound Service

The afternoon buses would leave EPTA's transfer center in downtown Martinsburg at 4:45 PM and 5:45 PM. The bus would travel directly to the Ashburn Station and arrive at 5:50 PM and 6:50 PM. There would be a 10-minute layover to allow for passengers to begin boarding the bus and to allow for a driver break. The bus would leave the Ashburn Station at 6:00 PM and 7:00 PM and arrive at Potomac Marketplace in Ranson at 6:55 PM and 7:50 PM. There would be a 5-minute layover to allow passengers to alight. The buses would depart Potomac Marketplace at 7:00 PM and 7:55 PM and would arrive at the transfer center at 7:25 PM and 8:20 PM.

Table 2: Afternoon Northbound Service

Martinsburg, WV		Ashburn, VA		Ranson, WV		Martinsburg, WV	
Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart
-	4:45 PM	5:50 PM	<b>6:00 PM</b>	6:55 PM	7:00 PM	7:25 PM	-
-	5:45 PM	6:50 PM	<b>7:00 PM</b>	7:50 PM	7:55 PM	8:20 PM	-

The schedule should be re-evaluated once service has begun and adjusted accordingly.

## Operating Cost

EPTA's FY 2021-22 fixed-route service costs were used to calculate EPTA's initial cost per mile of \$1.75 and cost per hour of \$39.94. These costs were updated to reflect an increase in driver salary as well as account for inflation. The new cost per mile of \$1.87 and cost per hour of \$39.94 were used to calculate EPTA's per mile and per hour cost for the commuter bus service based on schedule and mileage. The Martinsburg to Silver Line is expected to cost approximately \$291,200 to operate annually.



Table 3: Operating Cost

Martinsburg to Silver Line via Route 9					
	Total Miles	Total Hours	Mileage Based Cost	Hourly Based Cost	Total Cost
Per Day	381.80	10.20	\$713.97	\$406.06	\$1,120.02
Weekly	1,909.00	50.80	\$3,569.83	\$2,030.28	\$5,600.11
Annually	99,268.00	2,643.30	\$185,631.16	\$105,574.73	\$291,205.89

A detailed breakdown of EPTA's FY 2021-22 costs as well as the costing calculations for the commuter bus service can be found in Appendix B.

## Ridership

The Commuter Bus Feasibility Study completed a potential ridership analysis using Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) commuter flow data, identifying 343 potential riders who would use transit to commute if certain factors aligned with their needs, such as cost or schedule. The initial number was refined through a fare elasticity analysis, which examines the elasticity of transit ridership with respect to fare. The total number of riders was further refined taking in account the impact of Covid-19 on commuting as well as the reduction in the numbers of days employees are going into the office per week. Based on the analyses, approximately 126 potential riders would use the EPTA commuter bus service, which exceeds the capacity.

## Fare Structure

A fare analysis was conducted to establish a price point for the commuter bus service that would both maximize ridership and revenue. Based on the analysis, the recommended daily one-way fare should be \$7.00. This also aligns with the maximum fare range survey respondents indicated they were willing to pay.

At this rate, riders utilizing the transit service at full fare would experience an annual transportation cost savings compared to driving in a single-occupancy vehicle. For an individual with a 40-mile commute at 2.5 days per week, the cost to drive a personal vehicle is \$1,864 per year – compared to \$1,827 per year taking the commuter service 2.5 days per week at full fare.

Type	Annual Cost
One-way Fare	\$1,827
Discounted Daily Pass	\$1,370
Personal Car	\$1,864

Additionally, there is an opportunity to implement a discounted daily pass at a rate of \$10.50. This pass, if utilized, would instead cost an individual rider \$1,370 per year – a \$457 savings compared to driving a personal vehicle. EPTA would gain an adjusted annual revenue of \$164,430 with this discounted daily pass (assuming 30 passengers per trip). That annual revenue would account for the expected fare revenue to offset the difference between available grant funding and actual operating costs. The results of the fare analysis also show that EPTA could experiment with a monthly pass with a cost of \$160.

This fare structure offers EPTA the ability to discount fare rates if ridership falls below target, incentivizing people to utilize the commuter transit service.

Additional information on the fare analysis and structure can be found in **Appendix C**.

## Memorandum of Understanding

To ensure an integrated, cohesive transit network, and efficient services, EPTA will need to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with several private and public entities, including:

- Heidenberg Properties Group – Potomac Marketplace
- Loudoun County Transit – Ashburn Station
- Virginia State Corporation Commission – Dulles Greenway

The MOUs will allow EPTA to coordinate and collaborate on the responsibilities related to operating the interregional commuter transit service. The MOUs with Heidenberg Properties Group and Loudoun County Transit have been signed and executed. The MOU with Virginia State Corporation Commission should be signed prior to the start of service.

## Bus On-boarding

The commuter bus service will be an expansion of EPTA's transit service. Because of this, EPTA does not have dedicated buses within their existing fleet for the service and will need to purchase additional vehicles.

## Procurement

EPTA will acquire two additional buses for the proposed commuter service route. The anticipated purchase will be completed through the typical bus acquisition processes currently used by EPTA. The procurement of buses will require EPTA to ensure space for the new vehicles in its existing maintenance yards and incorporation into future maintenance plans.

The procurement process can be broken down into the following seven steps, which are representative of the procedures followed by many transit agencies in the country:

1. Needs Identification
2. Pre-solicitation
3. Solicitation Preparation
4. Solicitation Process
5. Evaluation Process
6. Award Process
7. Contract Process

## Model & Capacity

The vehicles are anticipated to be standard model 34-foot commuter buses, capable of transporting a maximum of 33 passengers. The vehicles will provide sufficient seating for all potential riders and be fully ADA-accessible, providing room for up to six passengers in wheelchairs or other mobility devices.

EPTA should develop technical specifications and specific language collaboratively with the bus Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) during contract negotiations to customize the new vehicles to the agency's needs as much as possible; to ensure the acceptance and payment process is fully clarified ahead of time; and to fully document the planned capabilities of the bus to ensure accountability.

EPTA should include a Vehicle Performance/Operating Profile section that specifies the expected capability of the buses to be delivered in the specifications. This section should include details regarding

the amount of time the buses are in service versus not in service as well as how many miles and hours they operate on a typical day.

## Procedures for Maintenance

Maintenance training should be completed by a combination of bus OEMs and component OEMs staff. Maintenance training should be provided to EPTA training staff as well as specific EPTA maintenance staff that are expected to conduct initial maintenance activities on the vehicles upon delivery. A schedule for full rollout of training to all required maintenance staff should be developed by EPTA.

Maintenance training should address the following components, at a minimum:

- Multiplex systems
- Entrance and exit doors
- Wheelchair ramp
- Brake systems and axles
- Air system and ABS
- Front and rear suspension and steering
- Body and structure
- Towing and Recovery
- Propulsion System
- Articulation Joint (where applicable)
- High Voltage Systems
- Charging Stations
- HVAC

### Routine Maintenance

EPTA should conduct annual physical maintenance on its newly procured vehicles to prevent future breakdowns or emergency maintenance issues.

### Unscheduled Maintenance

EPTA should conduct physical maintenance on its newly procured vehicles every 10,000 miles to prevent future breakdowns or emergency maintenance issues.

## Operator Training

To ensure the safe and efficient operation of the vehicles by properly trained staff, EPTA should identify operations staff who require training and then work with the OEMs to develop internal training requirements and program training materials. Operator training shall be provided by the OEMs to the EPTA staff and to any selected drivers necessary to conduct the initial bus validation testing. Operator training is recommended to be completed upon delivery of the first vehicle.

A schedule for full rollout of training to all required operators should be prepared by EPTA training staff once a schedule for delivery of the first set of vehicles is known. Training should consist of both classroom and hands-on activities, and cover, at a minimum, the following topics:

- General vehicle orientation
- Normal operating procedures
- Emergency operating procedures
- Moving a vehicle with a problem (fault)
- Revenue service preparation

## PASSIO Transit / Software Integration

EPTA should develop implementation procedures for their PASSIO Transit software. PASSIO will enable EPTA and passengers to use live map tracking to monitor where each vehicle is at an exact moment in time, checking whether trips are on schedule or if delays can be expected. Real-time alerts from the system will also help ensure passenger safety by sending automatic alerts and notifications should a bus deviate from the assigned route.

The details of the implementation procedures should include the following:

1. Schedule Data Preparation

If General Traffic Feed Specification (GTFS) data is used as an input, the GTFS data may need to be modified for use as a configuration input:

- a. Block ID values need to be present.
- b. Stop locations, schedules, and patterns need to be accurate.

2. Hardware Installation

Devices need to be installed on-board the buses, either by the vendor, a local installation contractor, or maintenance staff.

3. Testing

When the system is implemented, test the accuracy of the predictions and review if vehicles are consistently assigned to a route/trip so that predictions can be generated.

4. Public Beta

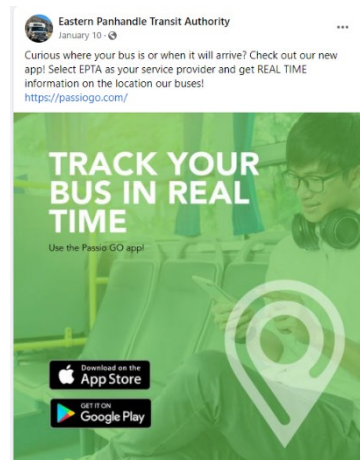
Perform a limited public rollout, announcing the real-time app, phone number (SMS and IVR), or other customer interfaces, along with a request for customers to share feedback. By calling this a public beta, customer expectations will be adjusted to expect and tolerate occasional inaccuracies.

5. Full Public Rollout

Once EPTA is confident in the reliability of the system, conclude the beta period and announce the system is fully implemented.

To maintain and monitor the system following implementation, EPTA should conduct the following tasks routinely:

- Keep data inputs up to date
- Monitor passenger usage and feedback
- Monitor operational performance
- Monitor prediction accuracy and real-time system performance



EPTA Social Media Post for PASSIO

## Financial Plan

Potential funding sources have been identified to cover capital costs, operating expenses, and vehicle procurement.

### Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program (CMAQ)

The CMAQ program is jointly administered by two agencies of the U.S. DOT – Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) – with an overarching goal of reducing congestion and improving air quality through surface transportation improvement projects. The Martinsburg, WV-Hagerstown, MD area is a maintenance area (an area that formerly violated, but currently meets the federal air quality standards) under the 1997 annual Particulate Matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), which consists of Berkeley and Washington Counties. Because of this, the Martinsburg, WV/Hagerstown, MD area qualifies for CMAQ funding as a former PM<sub>2.5</sub> nonattainment/maintenance area.

Transportation projects that qualify for CMAQ funding include traffic flow improvements, signalization coordination, most transit projects, new replacement vehicles and buses, and other travel demand management strategies. CMAQ also provides operating assistance for new transit service to attract new riders. EPTA’s commuter bus service would qualify for the CMAQ operating assistance funding as a new viable transit service. The operating assistance includes 80% coverage for the costs of providing new services to include labor, fuel, administrative costs, and maintenance. EPTA would be required to match 20% of the project cost.

The West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) is responsible for distribution of CMAQ funds, and in order to be a recipient the project must be identified on the HEPMPO transportation plan and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The FHWA CMAQ Emissions Calculator Toolkit’s Transit Bus Service and Fleet Expansion worksheet was used to calculate the expected air quality benefits associated with operating the commuter bus service to the Silver Line in Ashburn, Virginia. The implementation of commuter bus service shows an emissions benefit by utilizing bus travel and reducing personal vehicle trips to Northern Virginia and Washington, D.C. **Table 4** provides the emissions benefit in kilograms (kg) per day.

*Table 4: Emission Benefits*

Pollutant	Total Emissions Benefit kg/day
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	6.120
Particulate Matter <2.5 µm (PM <sub>2.5</sub> )	0.018
Particulate Matter <10 µm (PM <sub>10</sub> )	0.082
Nitrogen Oxide (NO <sub>x</sub> )	0.012
Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC)	0.048

### Changes Related to Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

The passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) of 2021 will lead to changes to the CMAQ Program. These include additional eligibilities to the program, expansion of operating assistance to certain areas, and the addition of a mandate requiring allocators to prioritize disadvantaged communities or low-

income populations when obligating funds to reduce PM<sub>2.5</sub> emissions. As a result of these changes, there may be more funding opportunities available for this service than in previous years.

## FTA Section 5311 Funds

The census tract surrounding the Potomac Marketplace stop, is classified as a code 4-10 rural-urban commuting area (RUCA) by the Economic Research Service (ECS). As an operator of public transportation within a rural confine, EPTA would be eligible to receive Section 5311 funding. However, since EPTA is a recipient of 5307 funds, EPTA is not eligible to receive 5311 funds under WVDOT's current policy. If state policy changes were to occur to allow recipients of 5307 funding to also utilize 5311 funding, then EPTA should consider utilizing Section 5311 funds for the operation of the commuter bus service.

## Other

FTA provides a variety of competitive grant programs which EPTA may have the opportunity to utilize throughout the duration of this pilot project. Competitive grants are not guaranteed but have the potential to provide funding above and beyond the formula grants that every transit agency receives. Some potential competitive grant opportunities that EPTA should continue to monitor:

- Helping Obtain Prosperity of Everyone (HOPE) Program;
- Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility Grants;
- Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program.

These programs align with the commuter service proposed by EPTA and the unique demographics of Martinsburg, West Virginia. Competitive grants require grant writing above and beyond the transitional formula grant process. EPTA could benefit from drafting a detailed description of the service once it is implemented in preparation for notice of funding opportunities (NOFOs) for any of the grants listed above.

## Marketing Plan

Marketing will be key component in the successful roll-out and implementation of the Martinsburg to Silver Line Commuter Bus Service. Outreach and marketing activities are intended to:

- **Build Awareness and Support** by targeting existing and potentials riders to ensure communities are informed about the new service.
- **Educate** potential riders on the new service, how it connects to existing transit services, and the benefits of utilizing it.
- **Promote Ridership** before the launch of the commuter bus service.
- **Retain & Attract New Riders** after the service is launched.

## Strategies

Developing marketing strategies will be critical for the implementation of the new commuter bus service as well as for its long-term viability. Successful marketing strategies will build on and leverage EPTA's existing strategies and partnerships to promote the new commuter bus service, build support within the community, educate riders about the service and its benefits, and generate ridership.

## Branding

Branding is the foundation of a marketing campaign. Branding can capture the attention of potential riders, create recognition and trust, build ridership, and distinguish the commuter bus service from EPTA's current fixed-route services. Branding strategies include the following:

### *Logo*

Logos are often a person's first interaction with a product or service. Logos are the identifier and can often become synonymous with a product. It is important that logos quickly and accurately convey a product's message. A clean and well-developed logo is critical to the branding of the commuter bus service.

### *Bus Branding*

Bus branding utilizes the transit vehicles themselves to promote awareness and strengthen brand identity through logos, colors, messaging, and other graphics. Branding should be simple and clean to ensure that it can quickly and easily convey information. The buses purchased for the commuter service should be branded with the new commuter bus logo and other key details. EPTA should also consider the branding of their non-commuter buses, vans, or cars with simple messaging promoting the new commuter service.

### *Signage*

Bus stop signs not only mark the physical location of a stop but can be used as an opportunity to advertise that transit service is available at a location to potential riders. EPTA should develop signage that will be used at the commuter bus boarding and alighting locations. Signage will especially be critical at Potomac Marketplace in Ranson where it will not only denote the bus stop and parking locations but will be visible to the patrons shopping at stores in the center. EPTA may also want to consider the use of wayfinding signage that will direct patrons to the bus stop. Signage should be simple and reflect the branding and logo used for the commuter bus.

## Ads

Ads have the ability to reach a wider target audience and bring awareness to a product through positive and clear messaging. EPTA should develop ads for the radio, their buses, print, and social media that target potential users of the new service. The ads should be clear and concise in presenting information about the service and reflect the commuter logo as well as EPTA's current branding.

## Rider Incentives & Promotions

Incentives and promotions can help motivate potential customers to try the commuter service by building interest while also incentivizing current riders to continue using the service. EPTA should consider the following rider incentives and promotions:

### *Ride Free*

Free rides can build interest in the service and help to establish regular ridership. At the inauguration of the commuter service, EPTA should consider a free trial period, possibly as short as one week or as long as 30 days, that would allow potential users to experience the benefits of the service without the financial commitment. Once the service has been established, EPTA should consider offering one free round trip for potential customers who sign up for an email newsletter or consider allowing potential customers to ride free on one specific day each month.

### *Rewards*

Rewards, such as discounts at partner organizations or businesses, can create interest in and encourage the purchase of discounted passes. EPTA should consider partnering with local businesses to offer a discount or incentive for those riders who purchase a discounted pass. EPTA may also consider allowing riders who purchase discounted pass to ride free on EPTA's fixed-route service.

### *Special Events*

Providing bus service to special events in the area allows potential riders to learn about the commuter service, experience the service, and understand the potential benefits of using it. EPTA should consider offering rides to the Silver Line for special weekend events, such as Dulles Day at Dulles Airport or the Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, D.C.

### *Qualified Transportation Fringe Benefits*

Qualified transportation fringe benefits allow for employers to provide employees with tax-free commuter benefits that can be used for transit passes, vanpool fares, or parking. Currently, Loudoun County Commuter Services offers a [SmartBenefits Plus \\$50 Incentive Program](#). The program provides a no-fee system for administering qualified transportation fringe benefits and encourages employees to utilize transit by providing participating Loudoun County employers with free SmartTrip Cards. The cards, which are pre-loaded with \$50, allow eligible employees to pay for buses, Metrorail, or vanpools. Once the funds are used up, the employee can enroll in the [SmartBenefits commuter benefits program](#) provided by WMATA. EPTA should consider a similar program.

### *Guaranteed Ride Home*

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's (MWCOG) [Guaranteed Ride Home](#) (GRH) is a free program operating across Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. that is designed to assist commuters in getting home in emergencies. This cooperative effort removes the fear of getting home should an unforeseen circumstance occur. EPTA should also offer a GRH program for passengers utilizing their commuter bus service. Since such a program is already operated in the District of Columbia, Virginia, and Maryland, EPTA should coordinate with MWCOG to ensure its riders can participate in this program.

## Targeted Outreach

Targeted outreach increases visibility of the commuter bus service by building awareness and educating potential riders about the service. EPTA should partner with local organizations and agencies to provide presentations on the commuter service as well as set up informational tables and displays. EPTA will be able to detail specifics about the service, provide brochures, and answer any questions related to the commuter service. Opportunities for targeted outreach include:

- Employment Fairs
- Community Meetings and Events
- Stop Locations - Potomac Marketplace
- Employers

## News Media

News coverage has the ability to reach a wide target audience and bring awareness to the commuter service. EPTA should leverage its relationships with the local media to provide press releases and



interviews that will provide positive stories and updates on the new service. This is a cost-effective opportunity to build ridership while engaging the community.

### Brochures

Brochures provide clear and succinct information and can be distributed to target audiences. EPTA should develop brochures highlighting the new commuter bus service. The brochures should be clear and concise in presenting information about the service and reflect the commuter bus branding. Brochures should be handed out at targeted outreach events and distributed to various locations within EPTA's service area such as real estate and new home builders offices for further distribution.

### Social Media

Social media allows for targeting a message to a large number of people very quickly. EPTA should continue to use their social media accounts to potentially reach a wider audience and promote the commuter bus service while providing up-to-date information to riders.

### Website & Apps

Potential riders are likely to utilize the internet to find travel information. Because many riders obtain information about current service and schedules directly from their website, EPTA should ensure that it provides riders with up-to-date information about the commuter service, including routes, schedules, and stop locations.

Marketing activities should not cease once the commuter bus service is launched. Ongoing efforts will be needed to retain current riders, attract new riders, and ensure the long-term viability of this service. EPTA should review and update its marketing efforts as necessary to ensure the strategies are effective.

## Budget

Many of these strategies are low-cost solutions that support and enhance EPTA's current marketing plan.

## Implementation

The following tasks, subtasks, and their corresponding timeframes for completion have been identified to guide EPTA in the successful implementation of commuter bus service. Unless otherwise noted, the timeframes listed below are all expected to occur prior to the start of the service, e.g., purchase and order of the commuter buses will be secured 18 months prior to the start of service.

*Table 5: Implementation Tasks*

Task	Subtask	Timeframe
Funding	Secure funding for the vehicles	-
	Continue to scan for NOFOs for competitive grants	Ongoing / Monthly
Bus Procurement & On-boarding	Purchase and order commuter buses	18 Months
	Delivery of commuter buses	6 Months
	PASSIO Transit Software installation and integration	5-6 Months
	Prepare training materials for drivers	4 Months
	Driver training	1-2 Months
Marketing	Work with WV DPT to finalize logo and bus branding	18-20 Months
	Identify potential partners and events for targeted outreach	8-12 Months
	Develop marketing materials and signage	4-5 Months

Task	Subtask	Timeframe
	Update website to include route & schedule information	3 Months
	Begin marketing commuter bus service	3 Months
	Fabrication of bus stop signage/wayfinding	2 Months
	Install bus stop signage/wayfinding	2-3 Weeks
Service	Test run of commuter service	5 Months
	Finalize bus schedules based on test run	4 Months
	Finalize MOUs	3 Months
Post-Implementation	Evaluate service and ridership	On-going
	Evaluate marketing strategies	beginning 1 Month After Start of Service

## Evaluation of Service

Ridership targets were established during the Feasibility Study for the first three years of operations. The targets assume that 70% of ridership will be met in the first year of operation, 90% of ridership will be met in the second year, and full ridership (100%) by the third year.

Table 6: Ridership Targets

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Total Riders per Bus	23	30	33
Total Riders in Morning/Afternoon Period	46	60	66
Total Daily Riders	92	120	132

If the service meets the established ridership standards, EPTA should consider increasing the service by adding additional buses to their current scheduled times or expanding their current service time offerings to include additional peak service times. If the service does not meet the established ridership standards, EPTA should considering eliminating service times when ridership is under performing its targets or adjusting its service times to better fit the needs of the public.

## Potential Risks

Potential risks have been identified to prepare EPTA for any contingency planning that may result due to changes in the implementation timeline. The goal is to minimize and potentially negate any adverse situations that could occur.

### Unsigned MOUs

While MOUs have been drafted and sent to their respective organization or agency, the MOU with the Virginia State Corporation Commission was unsigned at the time of this plan. If this MOU remains unsigned one month before the start of service, EPTA may need to identify an alternate route to the Dulles Greenway Toll Road. This may result in additional mileage and travel time. Schedules may have to be adjusted to reflect the additional time needed to complete a trip.

### Buses Not Delivered on Time

With current supply-chain issues, it is possible the commuter buses may not be delivered in time for the start of service or in-time to allow for hardware/software to be installed. This would result in delay to the start of service.

### Bus Capacity

It is anticipated that two 34-foot buses with a capacity of 33 passengers each will be purchased for this service, allowing capacity for up to 66 round trip passengers per vehicle, or 132 daily passengers in total. However, it is possible that the number of passengers wanting to utilize the service could exceed this capacity, resulting in some passengers being unable to take the bus. Some may not want to use the service if they are not guaranteed a seat, which could cause ridership to decline.

### Funding Shortfall

It is anticipated that EPTA will receive adequate funding to cover the purchase of two commuter buses; however, if only one bus is able to be purchased for the service, EPTA will need to update its service schedule to account for the availability of only one vehicle. EPTA could choose to eliminate one morning and one afternoon trip. Alternatively, EPTA could choose to update the service times so that one bus could make two trips.

Table 7: Service Schedule (1 Bus, 2 Trips)

Martinsburg, WV		Ranson, WV		Ashburn, VA		Martinsburg, WV	
Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart
-	<b>4:35 AM</b>	4:55 AM	5:00 AM	5:55 AM	6:05 AM	7:10 AM	-
-	<b>7:20 AM</b>	7:45 AM	7:50 AM	8:55 AM	9:05 AM	10:20 AM	-

Martinsburg, WV		Ashburn, VA		Ranson, WV		Martinsburg, WV	
Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart
-	2:55 PM	4:15 PM	<b>4:25 PM</b>	5:25 PM	5:30 PM	5:55 PM	-
-	6:05 PM	7:20 PM	<b>7:30 PM</b>	8:20 PM	8:25 PM	8:50 PM	-

### Future Opportunities

With steady population growth anticipated in Berkeley and Jefferson Counties as well as employment growth in neighboring counties, there could be several opportunities for future service enhancements. However, a formal transit analysis or study should be completed before the implementation of these opportunities. This will ensure that service provided by EPTA best reflects the needs and demands of the community.

### Service Times

If demand for the commuter bus far exceeds the capacity of the service, there could be an opportunity for EPTA to incorporate an additional trip for both the morning and afternoon periods. Ideally, an additional (third) bus would be purchased to make the run. Services times with three available buses are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Service Schedule (3 Buses, 3 Trips)

Martinsburg, WV		Ranson, WV		Ashburn, VA		Martinsburg, WV	
Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart
-	<b>5:00 AM</b>	5:20 AM	5:25 AM	6:20 AM	6:30 AM	7:35 AM	-
-	<b>6:00 AM</b>	6:25 AM	6:30 AM	7:25 AM	7:35 AM	8:50 AM	-
-	<b>7:00 AM</b>	7:25 AM	7:30 AM	8:35 AM	8:45 AM	10:00 AM	-

Martinsburg, WV		Ashburn, VA		Ranson, WV		Martinsburg, WV	
Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart
-	3:40 PM	4:50 PM	5:00 PM	6:00 PM	6:05 PM	6:30 PM	-
-	4:45 PM	5:50 PM	6:00 PM	6:55 PM	7:00 PM	7:25 PM	-
-	5:45 PM	6:50 PM	7:00 PM	7:50 PM	8:55 PM	8:20 PM	-

However, if EPTA is unable to secure additional funding to purchase a third vehicle, EPTA could choose to update the schedule so that two buses could make three trips, as shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Service Schedule (2 Buses, 3 Trips)

Martinsburg, WV		Ranson, WV		Ashburn, VA		Martinsburg, WV	
Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart
-	4:35 AM	4:55 AM	5:00 AM	5:55 AM	6:05 AM	7:10 AM	-
-	6:00 AM	6:25 AM	6:30 AM	7:25 AM	7:35 AM	8:50 AM	-
-	7:20 AM	7:45 AM	7:50 AM	8:55 AM	9:05 AM	10:20 AM	-

Martinsburg, WV		Ashburn, VA		Ranson, WV		Martinsburg, WV	
Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart	Arrive	Depart
-	2:45 PM	4:15 PM	4:25 PM	5:25 PM	5:30 PM	5:55 PM	-
-	4:45 PM	5:50 PM	6:00 PM	6:55 PM	7:00 PM	7:25 PM	-
-	6:05 PM	7:20 PM	7:30 PM	8:20 PM	8:25 PM	8:50 PM	-

### Deadhead Trips

There may be an opportunity to provide revenue trips on the return trip back to Martinsburg in the morning and on the trip down to the Ashburn Station in the afternoon. These trips could potentially accommodate commuters who work overnight or non-traditional hours as well as those who would take advantage of recreational opportunities in Jefferson and Berkeley Counties. Once the commuter service has been established, EPTA should evaluate the demand or need for this service.

### Weekend Service

With its close proximity to Washington, D.C. and other tourist destinations, there could be an opportunity for EPTA to provide limited weekend service to the Ashburn Station. The service could also be utilized by those who would take advantage of recreational opportunities in Jefferson and Berkeley Counties. EPTA should evaluate the need and demand for this service.

### Future Connections

The following locations have been identified as future service opportunities:

**Leesburg, Virginia** – Leesburg is a major employment destination for residents of Jefferson and Berkeley Counties and was identified in the 2019 Commuter Bus Service Analysis as a potential stop location and enhancement opportunity.

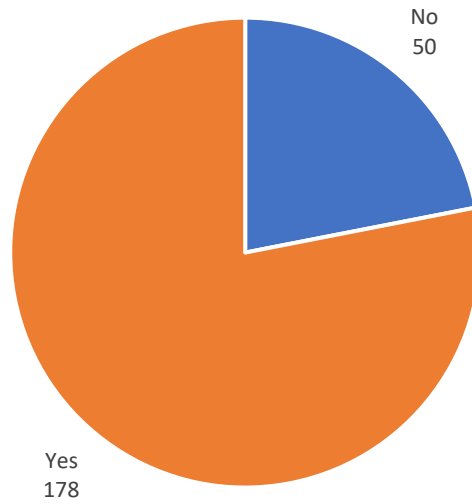
**Dulles Airport** – The airport is a hub for both national and international travel and could be an opportunity to provide direct transit service for those who work at the airport as well as for travelers who may not want to travel the DC Metro rail system or make multiple connections with luggage.

EPTA would need to evaluate the demand and need for these connection opportunities.

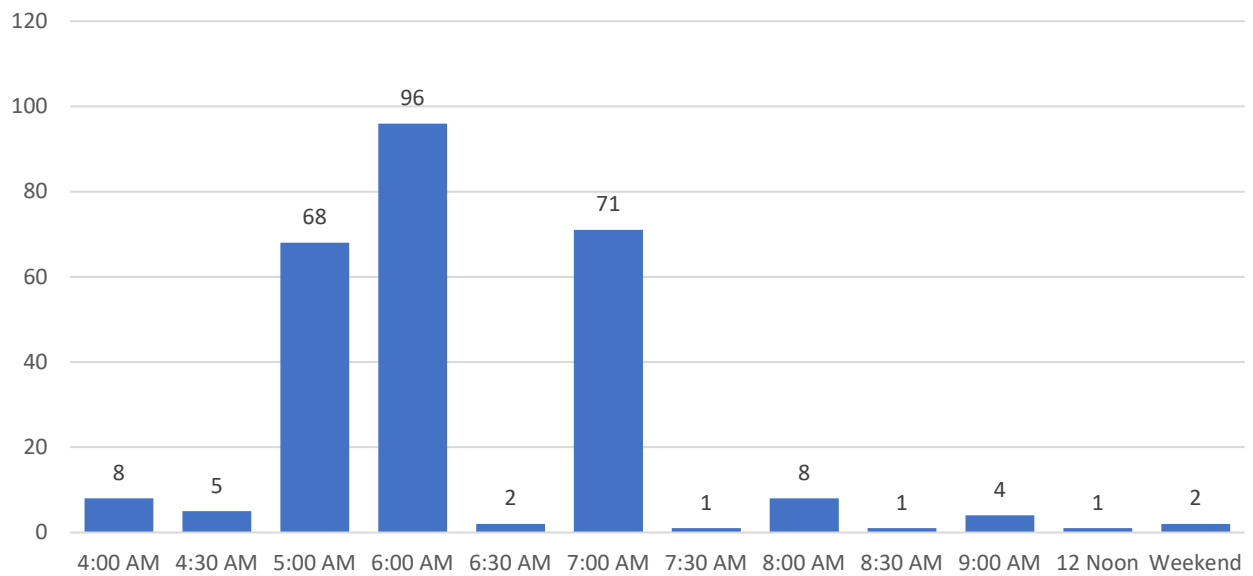
# Appendix A

## Commuter Bus Survey

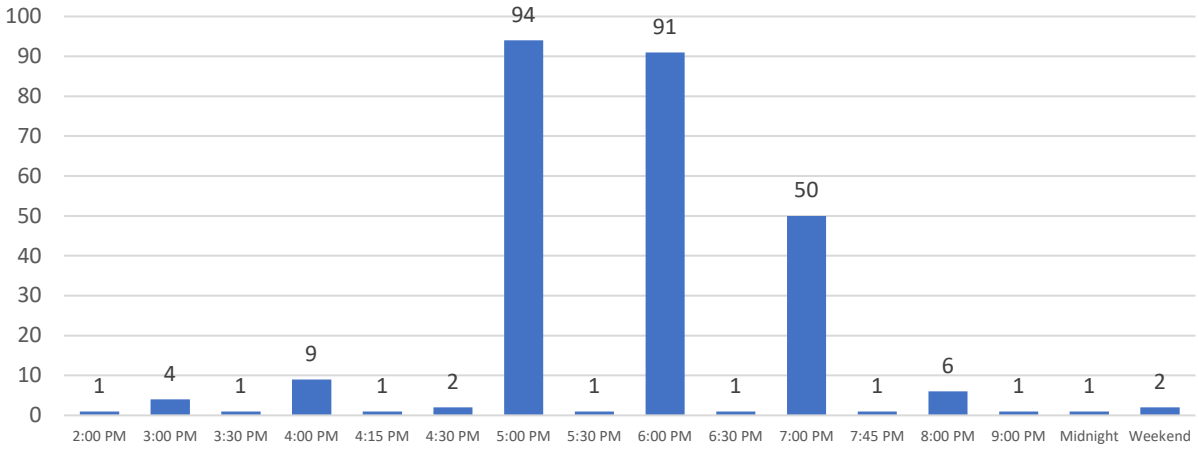
Would you take advantage of this commuter bus service?



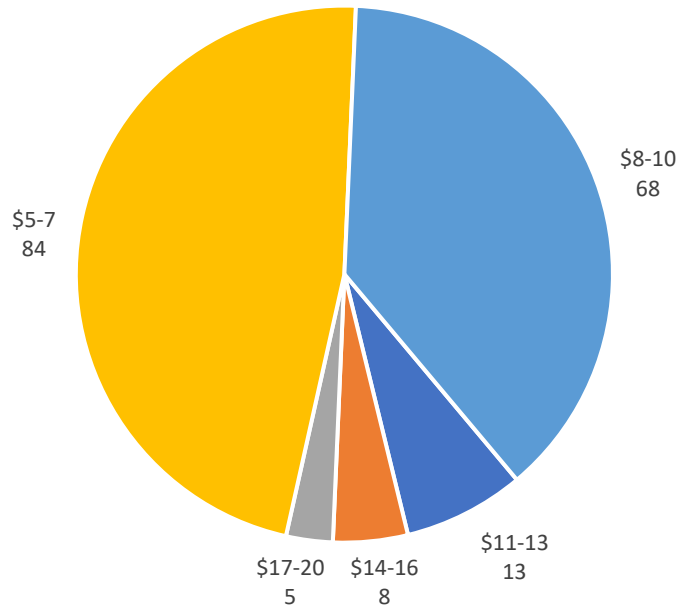
Which morning departure time from Martinsburg would you most likely use?



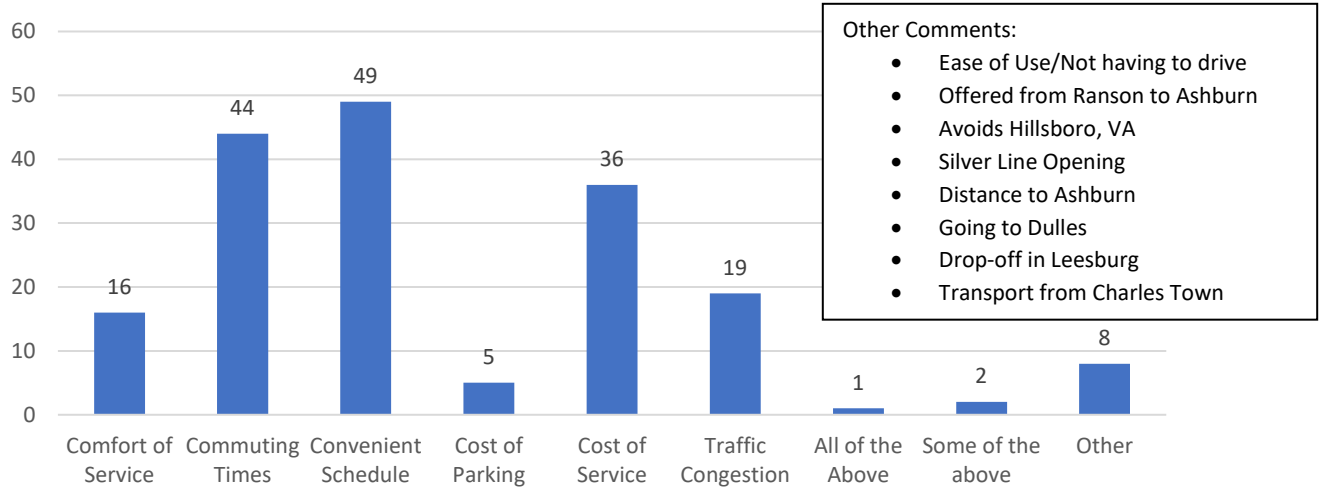
### What afternoon departure time from the Ashburn Station would you most likely use?



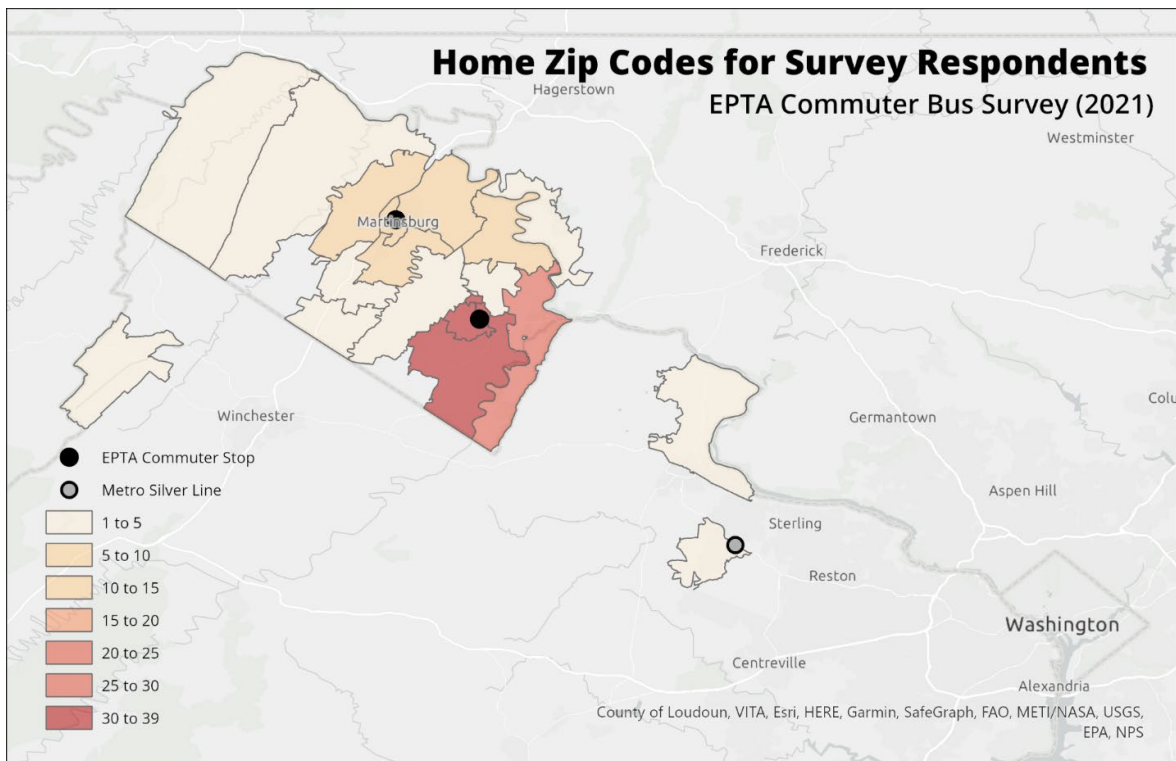
### What is the maximum fare you be willing to pay for this service?



### What would be the deciding factor for choosing to take commuter bus service?

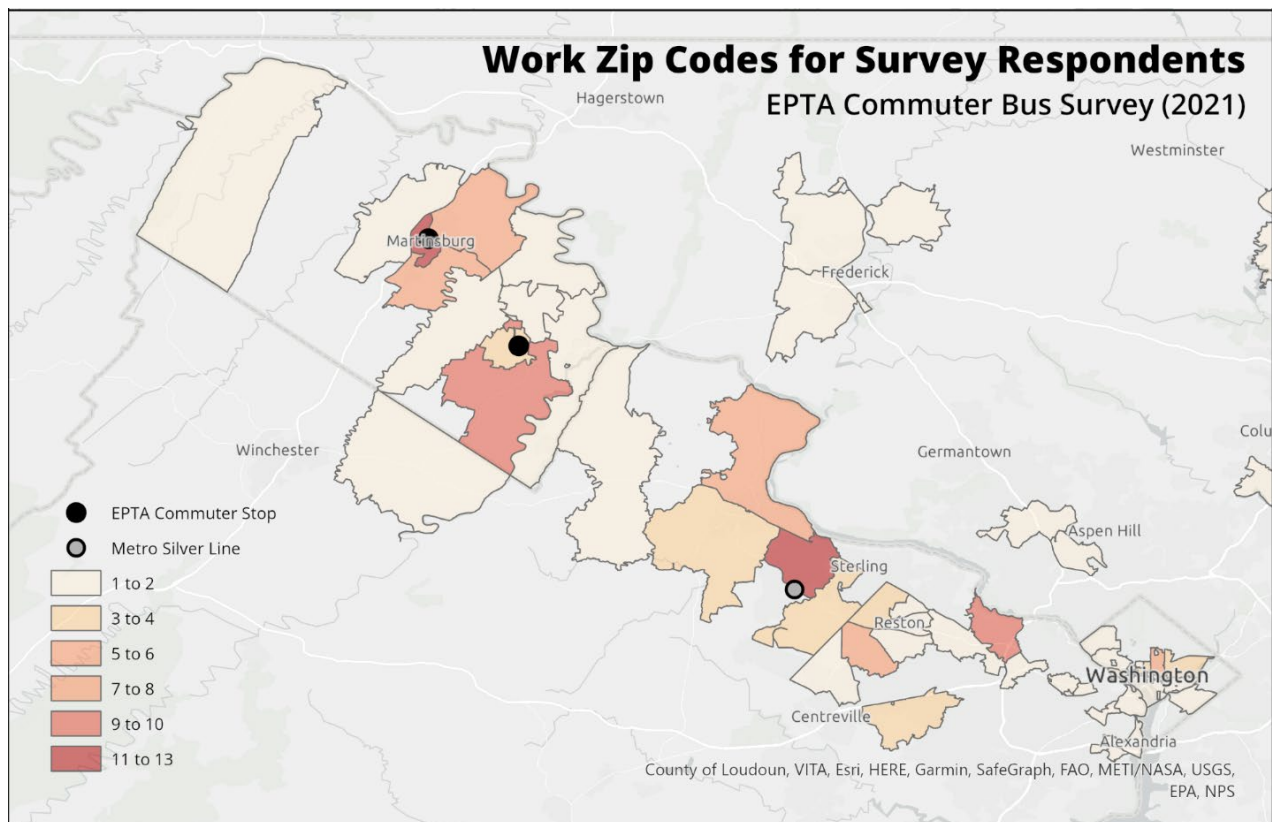


Home Zip Codes									
Zip	Count	Zip	Count	Zip	Count	Zip	Count	Zip	Count
25438	39	25443	12	25427	5	25413	2	20176	1
25414	34	25404	9	25442	5	25430	2	21782	1
25425	28	25403	8	25428	3	22637	1	-	-
25401	15	25405	8	25411	2	20148	1	-	-

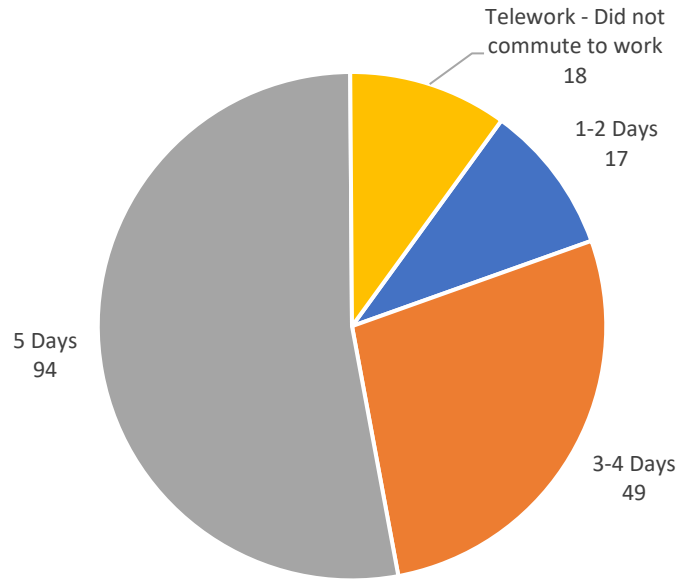




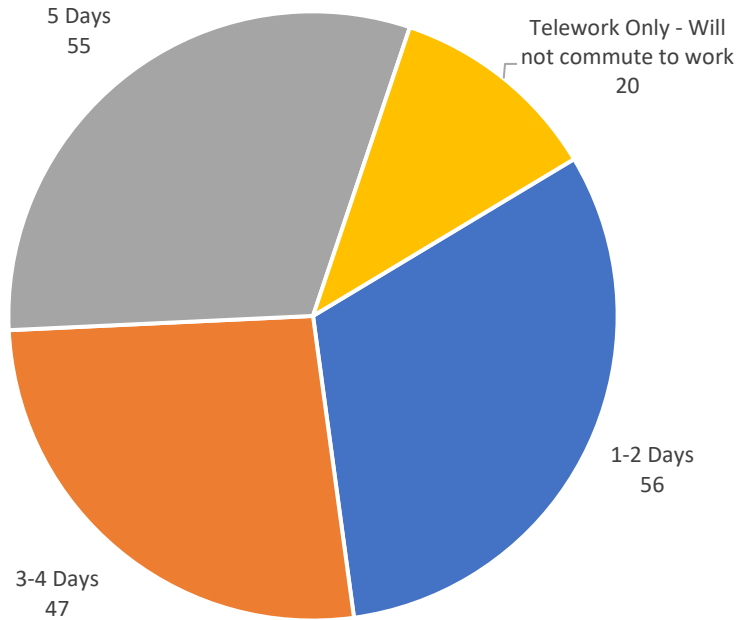
Work Zip									
Zip	Count	Zip	Count	Zip	Count	Zip	Count	Zip	Count
20147	13	20170	3	20016	1	20520	1	22205	1
25401	11	20175	3	20020	1	20560	1	22206	1
22102	9	22030	3	20041	1	20566	1	22303	1
25414	9	25438	3	20052	1	20590	1	22314	1
20001	8	20004	2	2006	1	20723	1	22611	1
20171	6	20007	2	20132	1	20810	1	25403	1
20176	6	20024	2	20177	1	20850	1	25411	1
20250	5	20036	2	20194	1	20852	1	25425	1
25404	5	20103	2	20219	1	21136	1	25430	1
25405	5	20151	2	20220	1	21702	1	25442	1
20002	4	20190	2	20224	1	21703	1	25443	1
20006	4	20191	2	20226	1	21793	1	26505	1
20166	4	22043	2	20229	1	22120	1		
22209	4	22202	2	20301	1	22182	1		
20005	3	20003	1	20500	1	22203	1		



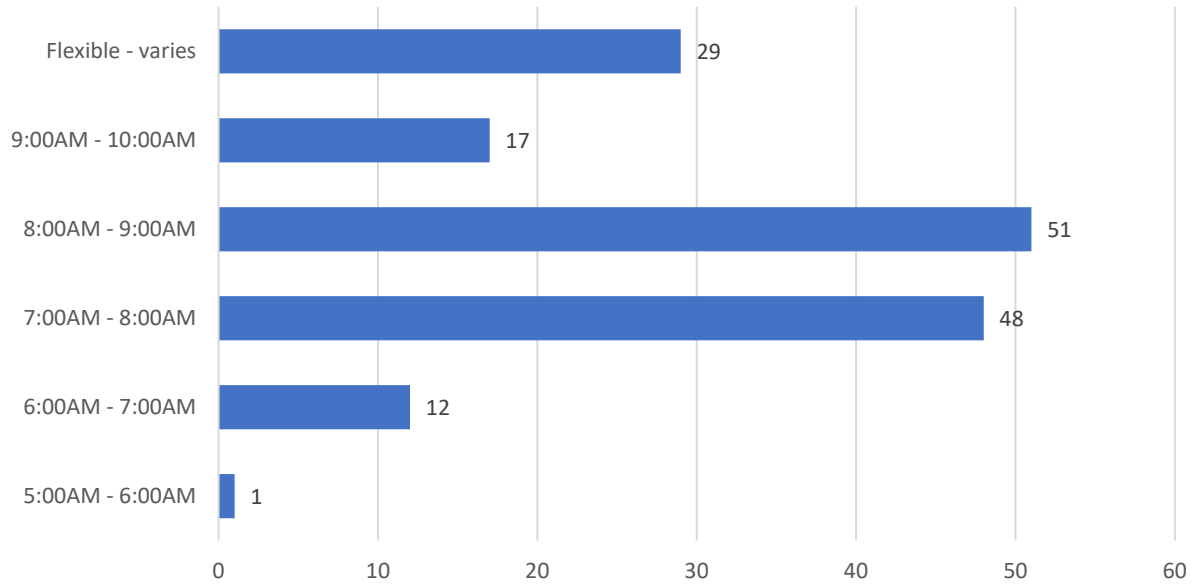
How many days a week did you commute to work pre-Covid pandemic?



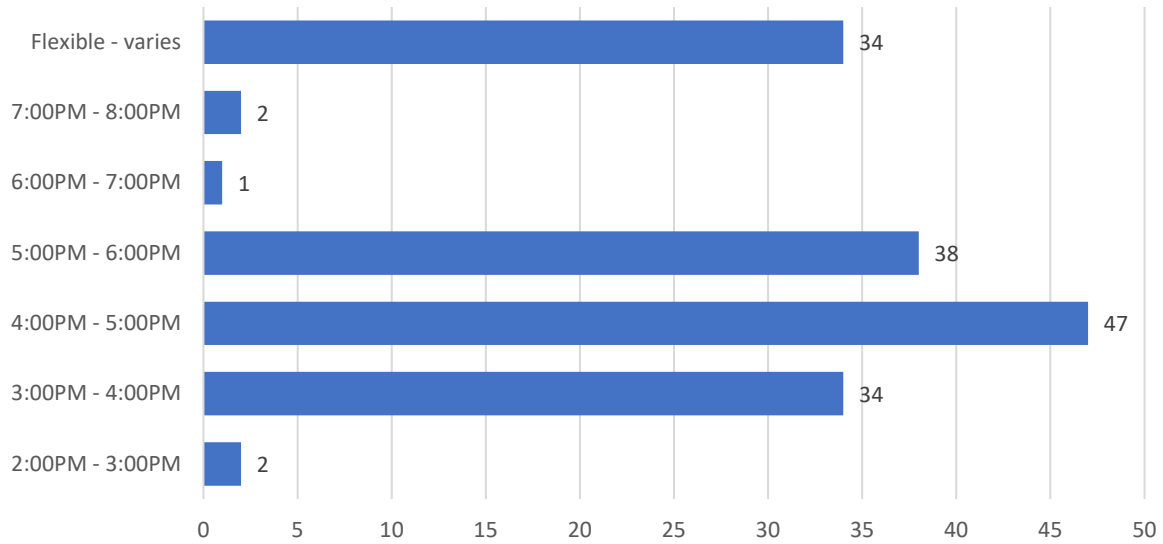
How many days a week do you anticipate commuting to work post-Covid pandemic?



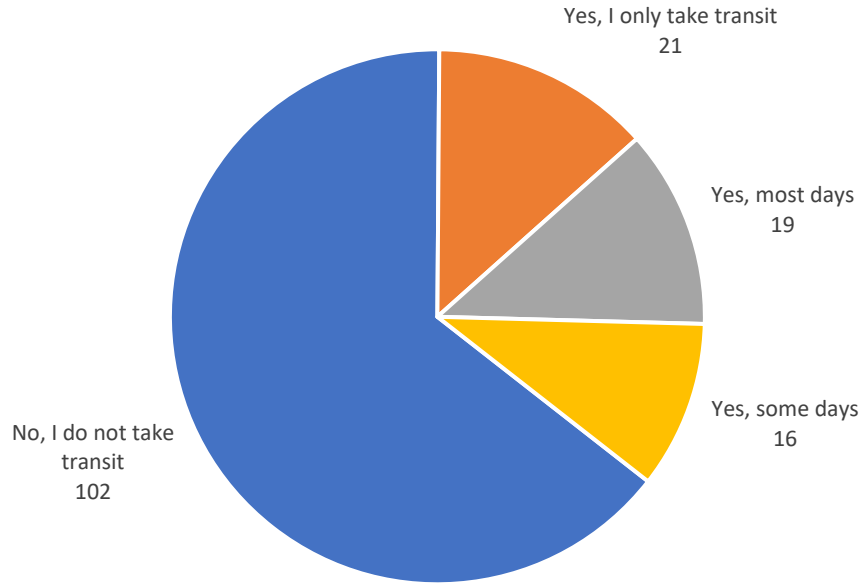
### What time do you typically start work?



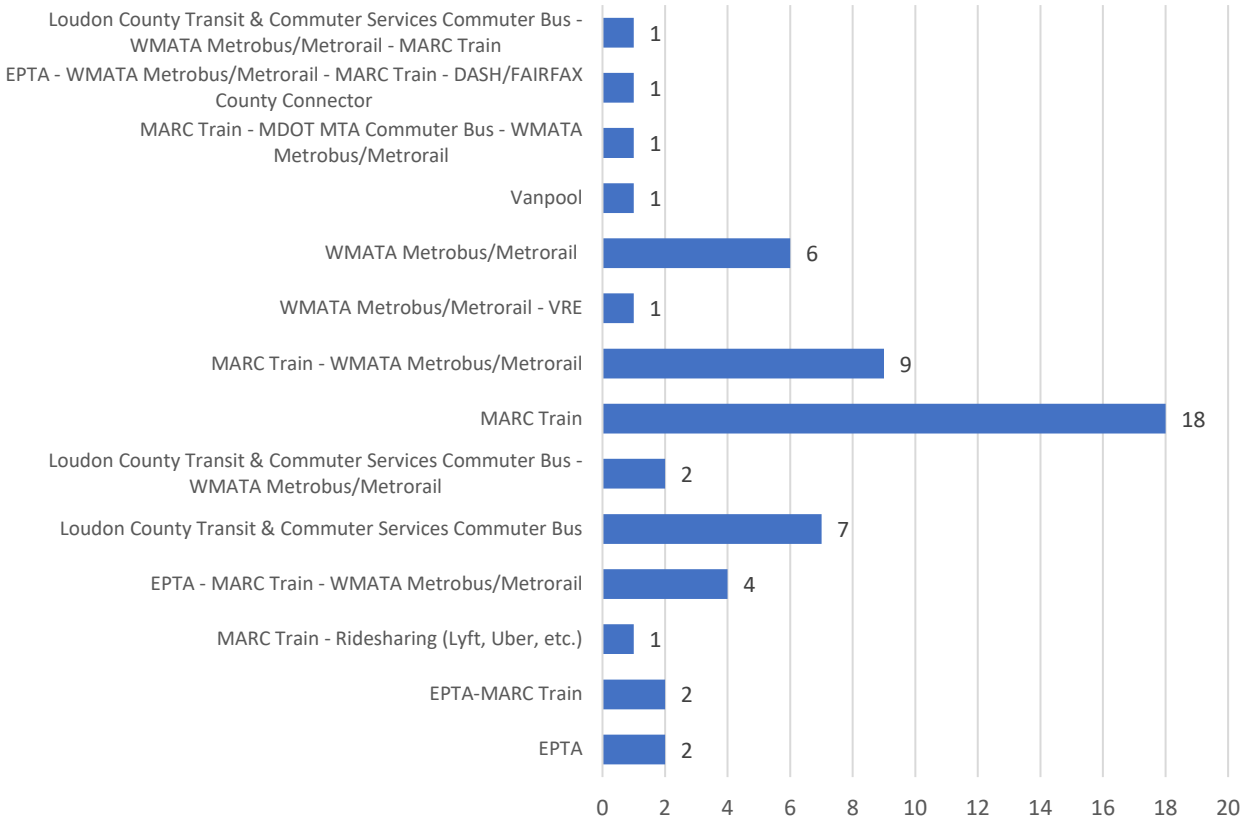
### What time do you typically leave work?



### Do you typically take public transit to work?



### What do you take?



# Appendix B

## Operating Cost Calculations

<b>FY 21-22 Fixed Route</b>	<b>Accrued by Miles</b>	<b>Accrued by Hours</b>	<b>General Admin</b>
Operators Salaries & Wages		\$873,170.00	
Other Salaries & Wages		\$-	\$554,583.00
Fringe Benefits		\$51,000.00	\$13,000.00
Services			\$135,950.00
Fuel & Lubricants	\$211,500.00		
Tires & Tubes	\$14,000.00		
Other Materials & Supplies	\$111,200.00		
Utilities			
Casualty & Liability Costs	\$110,000.00		
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$343,986.00		
<b>Annual Expenses:</b>	<b>\$790,686.00</b>	<b>\$924,170.00</b>	<b>\$703,533.00</b>

Actual Vehicle Miles or Hours:	452880	25188	
\$/Mi. or \$/Hr.:	\$1.75	\$36.69	
Adjustment for inflation or wages	\$0.12	\$3.25	
<b>Final \$/Mi or \$/Hr</b>	<b>\$1.87</b>	<b>\$39.94</b>	

	Morning		Afternoon		Total		Cost		
	Miles	Hours	Miles	Hours	Miles	Hours	\$/Mi	\$/Hr	Total
Per Day	190.4	4.92	191.4	5.25	381.8	10.17	\$713.97	\$406.06	\$1,120.02
Weekly	952.0	24.58	957.0	26.25	1,909.0	50.83	\$3,569.83	\$2,030.28	\$5,600.11
Annually	49,504.0	1,278.33	49,764.0	1365.00	99,268.0	2,643.33	\$185,631.16	\$105,574.73	\$291,205.89

## Appendix C Fare Analysis

Target Fare	Original Potential Daily Ridership	Adjusted for COVID	Adjusted for Virtual	Potential Daily Revenue	Potential Annual Revenue	Adjusted Potential Annual Revenue	Adjusted Potential Annual Revenue with Discounted Round Trip	Capacity Limited Revenue	Average Cost to Drive 40 Miles	Parking	Total Simple Driving Cost	Total Annual Fare Cost per Person – Full Fare Both Ways	Total Annual Fare Cost per Person Discounted Round Trip
\$5.00	343	309	154	\$3,430.00	\$895,230.00	\$402,853.50	\$342,425.48	\$133,110.00	4.28	\$10	\$1,863.54	\$1,305.00	\$1,109.25
\$5.50	326	293	147	\$3,584.35	\$935,515.35	\$420,981.91	\$344,439.74	\$140,940.00	4.28	\$10	\$1,863.54	\$1,435.50	\$1,174.50
\$6.00	310	279	139	\$3,714.69	\$969,534.09	\$436,290.34	\$345,396.52	\$148,770.00	4.28	\$10	\$1,863.54	\$1,566.00	\$1,239.75
\$6.50	294	265	132	\$3,823.04	\$997,812.17	\$449,015.48	\$345,396.52	\$156,600.00	4.28	\$10	\$1,863.54	\$1,696.50	\$1,305.00
\$7.00	279	251	126	\$3,911.26	\$1,020,838.60	\$459,377.37	\$344,533.03	\$164,430.00	4.28	\$10	\$1,863.54	\$1,827.00	\$1,370.25
\$7.50	272	245	123	\$4,085.87	\$1,066,411.75	\$479,885.29	\$351,915.88	\$172,260.00	4.28	\$10	\$1,863.54	\$1,957.50	\$1,435.50
\$8.00	265	239	119	\$4,246.51	\$1,108,339.05	\$498,752.57	\$358,478.41	\$180,090.00	4.28	\$10	\$1,863.54	\$2,088.00	\$1,500.75
\$8.50	252	227	113	\$4,286.32	\$1,118,729.73	\$503,428.38	\$355,361.21	\$187,920.00	4.28	\$10	\$1,863.54	\$2,218.50	\$1,566.00
\$9.00	246	221	111	\$4,425.00	\$1,154,923.93	\$519,715.77	\$360,913.73	\$195,750.00	4.28	\$10	\$1,863.54	\$2,349.00	\$1,631.25
\$9.50	240	216	108	\$4,551.06	\$1,187,827.75	\$534,522.49	\$365,725.91	\$203,580.00	4.28	\$10	\$1,863.54	\$2,479.50	\$1,696.50
\$10.00	234	210	105	\$4,670.83	\$1,219,086.37	\$548,588.87	\$370,297.48	\$211,410.00	4.28	\$10	\$1,863.54	\$2,610.00	\$1,761.75






# Appendix D

## Public Notices & Comments

Social Media



**Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization** ...

November 15, 2021 · 🌐

**PUBLIC NOTICE:** The [Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority](#) and the Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle MPO (HEPMPO) hereby notify all interested persons that an input survey on the proposed EPTA Commuter Bus Service is open to the public. The public survey will be open from November 15 to December 15, 2021.

The survey is available online at:  
<https://forms.office.com/r/DUTEqBGxgA>.

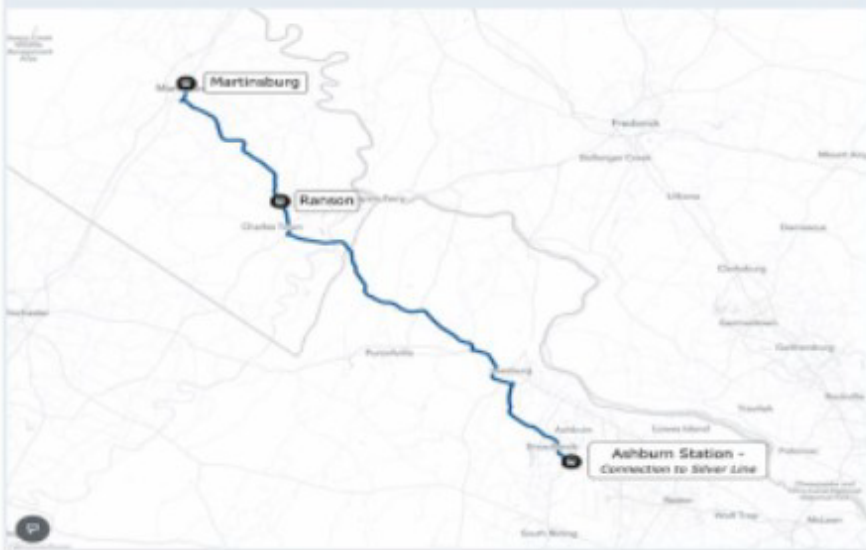
The survey seeks input on possible bus departure and arrival times from Eastern Panhandle to Ashburn Silver Line Metrorail Station in Virginia, as well as information on work destinations and current commuting patterns.



Questions and all written comments should be directed to Matt Mullenax at 240-313-2081, [mmullenax@hepmo.net](mailto:mmullenax@hepmo.net) or mailed to the HEPMPO office at 33 W. Washington St., Suite 402, Hagerstown, MD 21740. Only written comments will be accepted.

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**Commuter Bus Route**

The commuter bus would provide service between Martinsburg and the Ashburn Station with a stop in Ranson. Commuters would be able to transfer to WMATA's Silver Line or other local transit service at the Ashburn Station.





16

8 Comments 42 Shares



**Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization**



December 7, 2021 · 🌐

Have you shared your thoughts? Over 150 folks have shared theirs on the proposed commuter bus service from Eastern Panhandle to N. Virginia! Survey open until 12/15:  
<https://forms.office.com/r/DUTEqBGxgA>.



👍 5

14 Shares

 **Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization**  
December 14, 2021 · 🌐

Tomorrow is last day for our commuter survey! Learn more about the effort in this [WDVM](#) interview:



LOCALDVM.COM

**Transit planning can attract workers from northern Virginia to West Virginia eastern panhandle**

👍 5 2 Shares



Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization

April 29 · 🌐

**PUBLIC NOTICE:** The Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle MPO and Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority hereby notifies all interested persons that the DRAFT EPTA Commuter Bus Service Implementation Plan is available for comment and review. The public comment period will be from May 1 to May 30, 2022. Those persons wishing to review the draft plan may download a copy at [www.hepmo.net](http://www.hepmo.net). Copies of the draft plan available at the Charles Town Library and the Martinsburg Public Library.

This plan seeks to identify operation and planning steps needed to implement a new commuter bus service that would include stops in Martinsburg and Ranson taking Eastern Panhandle commuters to the new Ashburn Metrorail Station in Ashburn, VA.

Questions and all written comments should be directed to Matt Mullenax at 240-313-2081, [mmullenax@hepmo.net](mailto:mmullenax@hepmo.net) or mailed to the HEPMPO office at 33 W. Washington St., Suite 402, Hagerstown, MD 21740. Only written comments will be accepted.

A public meeting with a formal presentation on the draft plan will be held May 19th from 5:00-6:30pm at the Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority Offices (446 Navak Drive, Martinsburg, WV 25405). A virtual option will be offered to attend the public meeting as well with details available at [www.hepmo.net](http://www.hepmo.net).

# Commuter Bus Implementation Plan



May 2022

**Draft for Public Review**

**Michael Baker**  
INTERNATIONAL



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Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization

May 3 · 🌐



Our draft Commuter Bus Service Implementation Plan with [Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority](#) is out for public comment. Learn more in this article or @ [www.hepmo.net](http://www.hepmo.net)



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Community participation encouraged in public comment period for commuter bus plan draft

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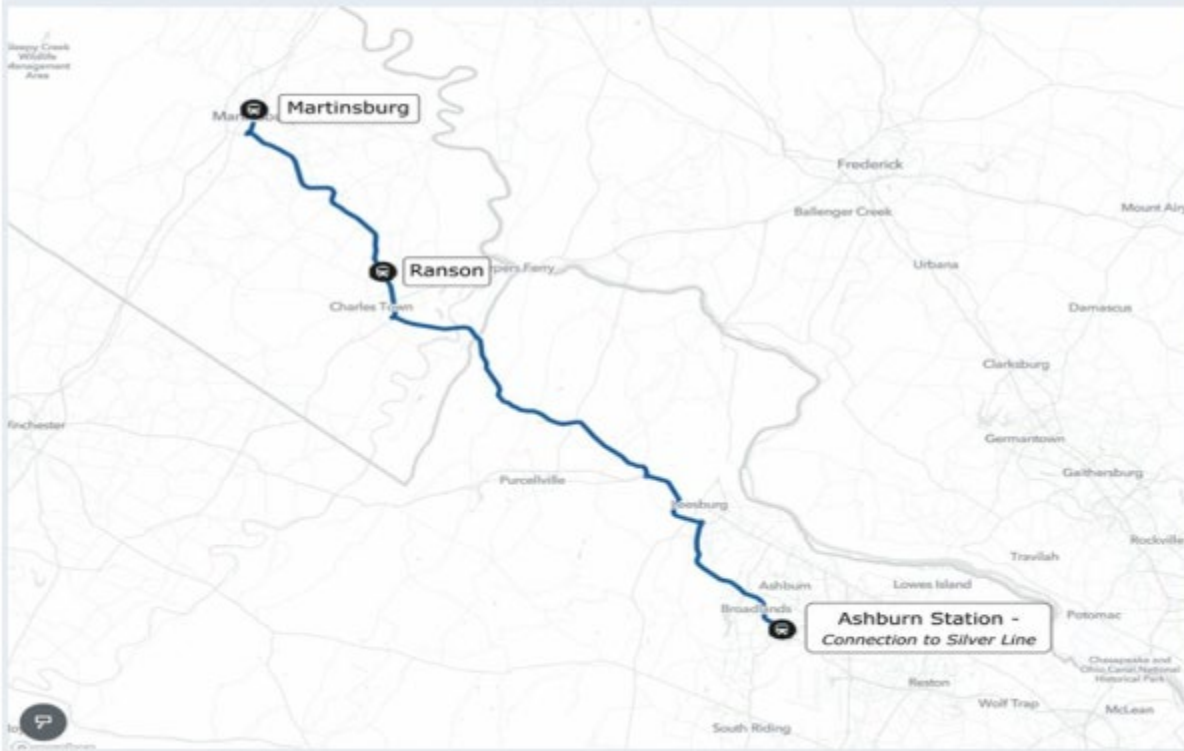
May 16 at 7:44 AM · 🌐



Join HEPMPO and Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority 5/19 @ 5pm for a public meeting discussing the proposed commuter bus service between the Eastern Panhandle and Ashburn VA. Meeting details here: <https://www.hepmo.net/.../116f69...>

### Commuter Bus Route

The commuter bus would provide service between Martinsburg and the Ashburn Station with a stop in Ranson. Commuters would be able to transfer to WMATA's Silver Line or other local transit service at the Ashburn Station.



👍 6

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## Articles

**WEST VIRGINIA**

# Transit planning can attract workers from northern Virginia to West Virginia eastern panhandle

by: [Steven Cohen](#)  
 Posted: Dec 13, 2021 / 05:43 PM EST  
 Updated: Dec 13, 2021 / 05:47 PM EST



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BERKELEY COUNTY, W.Va. (WDVM) — Regional planners are looking to make it easy for residents to commute to the Washington D.C. area from West Virginia. Why? That’s where the jobs are.

There’s already a MARC commuter railroad in place, but the regional growth calls for even more innovative options.

“You see the growth in jobs that’s happening in Northern Virginia as we see Amazon HQ headquarters moving into Crystal City,” said Matt Mullenax, executive director for the Hagerstown-Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization. “All the increased opportunities for travel from Dulles International Airport, folks from the eastern panhandle are looking more than ever to northern Virginia.”



A bus system is already in place for the region, but planners seek to expand the reach of the route to the bustling Washington, D.C. market.

“With more and more people moving into the area they require transportation to the greater DC area — metro area — a commuter bus is a great example of how we can move forward,” said Elaine Bartoldson, executive director for the Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority.

Bartoldson says beyond the commute to the dynamic job market in suburban northern Virginia, the transit authority can support tourism, for example, as sightseers visit historic sights in Harpers Ferry and Shepherdstown, for instance.

“All those things can be accessed by public transit and I think that’s part of our plan for the eastern panhandle especially Berkeley and Jefferson counties, is to be part of that growth,” said Bartoldson.

Mullenax and Bartoldson are asking commuters to design a system that works best for them

“We’re really interested in understanding preferred departure times, preferred arrival times, where folks are headed to on their work, what would be a reasonable fare and what schedules might work best for them,” said Mullenax.

The eastern panhandle [online survey](#) concludes on Wednesday. Service to northern Virginia could begin as early as 18 months. Bartoldson said the expansion of commuter service from the eastern panhandle will include Wi-Fi for passengers with charging portals and “luxury” seats, a step-up from the usual seating on public transit.

WEST VIRGINIA NEWS

# Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority to expand service to Northern Virginia

by: [Mikayla Newton](#)

Posted: May 24, 2022 / 05:54 PM EDT

Updated: May 25, 2022 / 08:49 AM EDT



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MARTINSBURG, W.Va. (WDVM) — If you live and work in Martinsburg, West Virginia you may soon be able to take a bus out to northern Virginia. A new project from the eastern panhandle transit authority (EPTA) is working on a huge project that will do just that.

In an effort to fulfill a work-commuter need –EPTA will soon launch and expand its bus service from Martinsburg, West Virginia to Ashburn, Virginia.

“With the rising gas prices, really commuter bus service is in great demand and will continue to rise so it’ll be a good solution to those costs, increased costs that we’re all having,” said Elaine Bartoldson, the executive director of the EPTA, Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority.

The cost for a one-way seat is estimated at \$7.00, but EPTA says you will be saving money by using public transit.

Loudon County's commuter bus plans to expand as well, but EPTA says, it's no competition, but rather a partnership.

"They have dedicated a bus bay for them to bring in their commuter bus at the southern pavilion of the Ashburn metro rail station when it opens. In addition to that Loudoun County Transit has eight routes that they have redone in order to work with the new Ashburn station, so there are other transfers that EPTA can make working with Loudoun there," said Matt Mullenax, the executive director, of the Hagerstown/Eastern, Panhandle MPO.

The project hopes to increase the number of options for getting workers that live in West Virginia into Loudon County.

The new bus service will generate from the Caperton Train Station until the new transit center in downtown Martinsburg is up and running. They hope to have designated parking for commuters at the Potomac Marketplace where riders will then continue to the new Ashburn station.

The expected time for this project to be complete is around Dec. 2023. That day could be subject to change.

# Community participation encouraged in public comment period for commuter bus plan draft



By Emily Keefer ekeefe@journal-news.net May 2, 2022 Updated May 3, 2022



A public meeting with a formal presentation on the draft plan for the HEPMPO and EPTA commuter bus will be held May 19 from 5-8:30 p.m. at the Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority office at 448 Novak Drive in Martinsburg. Submitted photo




MARTINSBURG — The Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization (HEPMPO) and the Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority's (EPTA) draft commuter bus service implementation plan is available for public comment.

Matt Mullenax, executive director of HEMPO, said that there was an overwhelming, positive response from the community when the survey went out last year.

The plan seeks to identify operation and planning steps needed to implement a new commuter bus service that would include stops in Martinsburg and Ranson, taking Eastern Panhandle commuters to the new Ashburn Metrorail Station in Ashburn, Virginia.

Full publication

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"Folks are really interested in it," he said. "We have a draft out that includes the analysis and initial results from the public survey that we did last year."

Mullenax added that the draft looks at times, stop locations and more.

"We really want folks to take a look at this plan — if they are currently making that commute, or if they are interested in making that commute, if this is something that lines up with what may be valuable to them," Mullenax said. "We see it as a critical connection for the Eastern Panhandle, commuting our population and our workers down to Northern Virginia."

The public comment period is under way and runs through May 30.

To download or view a copy of the draft plan, visit [https://www.hepmo.net/\\_files/ugd/116f69\\_2341bb6467da45eea368712b3ab4cb6a.pdf](https://www.hepmo.net/_files/ugd/116f69_2341bb6467da45eea368712b3ab4cb6a.pdf).

Questions and all written comments should be directed to Matt Mullenax at 240-313-2081, [mmullenax@hepmo.net](mailto:mmullenax@hepmo.net) or mailed to the HEPMPO office at 33 W. Washington St., Suite 402, Hagerstown, MD 21740. Only written comments will be accepted, the official public notice said.

A public meeting with a formal presentation on the draft plan will be held May 19 from 5-6:30 p.m. at the Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority office at 446 Novak Drive in Martinsburg. A virtual option will be offered to attend the public meeting, as well, with details available at [www.hepmo.net](http://www.hepmo.net).

"We have just been getting positive feedback, encouragement and a desire from all interested parties to see this service implemented, and we want to continue to hear from the public that is still in fact the case," Mullenax said.

# EPTA commuter bus service plan discussed at HEPMPO meeting



By Jessica Wilt jmanuel@journal-news.net Mar 16, 2022 Updated Mar 17, 2022



Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization Executive Director Matt Mullenax shared updates to the Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority bus service plan that will connect to Northern Virginia at Monday's meeting. Submitted photo

During a meeting on Monday, Matt Mullenax, executive director of the Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization (HEPMPO), shared an update to the Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority commuter bus service plan that will connect Berkeley and Jefferson counties to Ashburn, Virginia.

Mullenax said Loudoun County Transit recently shared it would be having eight newly revised routes within the county with access to the Ashburn station that would expand the destination opportunities for local riders taking advantage of the service.

"In addition to our riders hopping on at either Martinsburg or Ranson and then going to Ashburn and taking the Silver Line all the way to Northern Virginia or to the District, they can also hop on up to eight different buses and commute all throughout Loudoun County," Mullenax said.

Full publication

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The EPTA, which is expected to be up and running within roughly 12-18 months, will connect commuters in Berkeley and Jefferson counties to a station in Ashburn, but it is not intended to replace any existing services, instead, expanding on those already in place.

Mullenax also shared EPTA is in discussion with the Heidenberg Properties Group about a potential stop at the Potomac Marketplace in Ranson, the shopping area that includes Weis and Kohl's, among other businesses.

Also discussed at Monday's meeting, Mullenax shared HEPMPO is in the early stages of a transportation systems management and operations plan for Interstate 81 in West Virginia. The plan will come as a partnership with the West Virginia Department of Transportation and Region 9, and it will be similar to one formed by the organization in 2020 for Interstates 81 and 70 in Washington County, Maryland.

Mullenax said the plan will be one of the first of its kind in the state.

"Really, it's focused on improving safety and reducing congestion along the corridor without adding additional capacity," he said.

Mullenax said the improvements could be anything from geometric and safety improvements to incident management improvements and more.

"We're very early in getting agreements and the scope of work together," he said, adding he anticipates more updates in the coming months.

# HEPMPO discusses potential new commuter bus service

By Colin McGuire [cmcguire@journal-news.net](mailto:cmcguire@journal-news.net) Feb 2, 2022



The planning for a new commuter bus service between the Eastern Panhandle and Northern Virginia was discussed at Wednesday's HEPMPO meeting.

Submitted photo



MARTINSBURG — Another step toward a new commuter bus service was discussed at the most recent Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization (HEPMPO) meeting, which was held virtually Wednesday afternoon.

That step included a public survey that was recently completed. In all, the organization received 228 responses to it, and the strongest replies came from Jefferson County. The survey included questions about if people would take advantage of the service and how much would they be willing to pay for it, among other things.

"About 50% of those who responded said they actively use public transit," Matt Mullenax, executive director of the HEPMPO, said during the meeting. "I was surprised to learn that a lot of people board the train in Harpers Ferry and go all the way into Union Station before working their way into Northern Virginia. That was interesting."

Mullenax went on to note that the potential commuter bus service, if it moves forward, wouldn't actually be up and running for at least another 12 to 18 months, if not longer. It will be aimed at Eastern Panhandle commuters getting to Northern Virginia, he said, and he stressed that the service wouldn't replace others that already exist. Instead, it would expand on the commuting opportunities that those in the Eastern Panhandle already have available to them.

Best of





Also Wednesday, Mullenax briefly touched on the long-range transportation plan, for which he said consultants are currently in the process of developing cost estimates. His hope, he noted, is to present the plan to his colleagues in late March before scheduling public meetings on it for April. As of Wednesday, he explained that the project remains "on schedule and on budget."

Finally, the HEPMPO addressed some recent personnel shakeout. To begin, Kevin Donohue recently resigned from his position as a transportation planner with the organization. Mullenax relayed that his intention is to leave the position open until May and then advertise it, if only because he would like the opportunity to train whomever steps in.

Meanwhile, votes for chairperson and vice chairperson took place as a means of reorganization. Taking the place of Mark Baldwin as chair will now be Kevin Cerrone, moving forward, while Elaine Bartoldson was elected vice chair of the group.

The next regularly scheduled meeting for the HEPMPO is set for Wednesday, March 16.

## Public Comment

Date	Comment	Response
5/4/22	<p>I just read about the proposed plans for a bus leaving Martinsburg and Ranson for the Metrorail station in Ashburn, VA. I tried to put in that long website but was unsuccessful. I would really like to know what the route will be. Will you have a pickup and drop off stop in Inwood, WV? Perhaps where the new Food Lion will be in Butlers Crossing where folks in Inwood and Gerrardstown can park and take the bus into VA? What about a bus taking folks directly into DC from Martinsburg or Inwood? I can get to the HEPMPO website so let me know where I can find those proposed routes.</p>	<p>Thank you for reaching out and providing your comments. Attached is a map of the proposed route.</p> <p>My apologies for the difficulty in getting the Draft Commuter Bus Service Plan to load. Here's the direct link to the Plan pdf: <a href="https://www.hepmo.net/files/ugd/116f69_2341bb6467da45eea368712b3ab4cb6a.pdf">https://www.hepmo.net/files/ugd/116f69_2341bb6467da45eea368712b3ab4cb6a.pdf</a>.</p> <p>The route is looking to start in Martinsburg at the corner of Race/Raleigh Street, head east along Route 9, stop at Ranson near Weis and then continue along Route 9 eventually to the new Ashburn VA Metrorail Station. From there folks can hop the Metro to Dulles, Tysons Corner, Crystal City and eventually Union Station. Folks could also access Loudoun Co. Transit and ride throughout Leesburg.</p> <p>At this time both property owners at the proposed stops in Martinsburg (EPTA) and Ranson (Heidenberg Group) have agreed to provide free parking.</p> <p>We're reviewing State/Federal funding to pilot the service initially and demonstrate demand/viability. There will be opportunities for increasing service area, expanding routes especially as funding is secured.</p> <p>For any additional information we are hosting a public meeting on 5/19 @ 5pm to discuss the draft plan. This meeting will be at EPTA's Offices on Novak Drive, as well as virtually through Microsoft Teams: <a href="https://fb.me/e/1s6qtdCK9">https://fb.me/e/1s6qtdCK9</a>.</p>
	<p>Thank you so much for this email. I know I am unaware of all the particulars of planning and implementing transit plans but in my mind I would love to ride a bus to DC, or even to Dulles. Just an idea but would your organization consider negotiating a parking area at the upcoming Butler's Crossing in Inwood so Inwood and Gerrardstown folks could ride the bus to Ashburn? I will try to attend the May 19<sup>th</sup> meeting. Thank you so much for the link. I will take a look at it.</p> <p>I am a big believer in buses and trains growing up in an large urban area. I think those living in rural areas will soon realize how valuable and beneficial (often costly however) public transit can be.</p>	<p>Yes, our hope is that once demand for the route is demonstrated and exceeded, service expansion could be expanded on both ends of the commuter trip.</p> <p>The biggest hurdle were facing currently is the amount of capital and operating funding needed to start and sustain the commuter service to develop a core ridership.</p> <p>Let us know if you have any follow-up questions after you've had a chance to review the document and thanks again for your comments.</p>

## Sign-in Sheet

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## Online Meeting Participants:

Name	Organization
Rebecca Bankard	Michael Baker International
Jennie Brockman	Jefferson County Planning
Steven Cohen	BCDA
Aarion Franklin	Michael Baker International
Jim Frazier	Michael Baker International